

Application No. 10/824,114
Amendment dated March 27, 2006
Reply to Office Action of October 27, 2005

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are pending. Pursuant to the restriction requirement in this application, claims 10-26 are cancelled herein without prejudice to their refiling in a continuation application. Further, claim 8 is cancelled herein. Accordingly, claims 1-7 and 9 are at issue.

The drawings stand rejected under 37 C.F.R. §1.121(d). Replacement sheets will be submitted in the near future to address the drawing objection.

Claim 9 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but is indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, claim 9 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of base claim 1 and intervening claim 8 so that claim 9 should now be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 2, 5-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,698,667 to Happ et al. Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Happ et al. Claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Happ et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,585,295 to Jernstrom. Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Happ et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,906,327 to Chamings.

The rejections, as they may apply to the claims presented herein, are respectfully traversed.

As amended, claim 1 calls for a testing apparatus for repetitively simulating forces generated by different pyrotechnic devices on a seat belt system. The testing apparatus includes a pretensioner portion and actuating fluid for being supplied to the pretensioner portion. A control portion stores the actuating fluid at predetermined pressures selected to deliver the fluid to the pretensioner portion for simulating performance characteristics of pyrotechnic devices on the seat belt system. Claim 1 further calls for a retractor of the seat belt system, and an energy dissipation module distinct from the retractor and disposed between the retractor and the pretensioner portion to avoid impacts with the pretensioner portion during testing operations to allow for repeated use of the testing apparatus. None of

the cited art discloses or suggests a testing apparatus including the distinct energy dissipation module between a pretensioner portion and a seat belt retractor, as called for in amended claim 1.

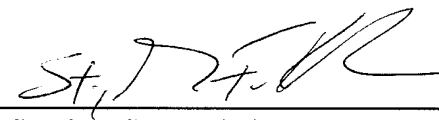
In particular, the Action relies upon the combination of Happ et al. and Chamings as rendering obvious the previously claimed subject matter directed to an energy dissipation module. However, it is clear that neither Happ et al. or Chamings are directed to a testing apparatus that is for repetitively simulating forces generated by different pyrotechnic devices, as set forth in claim 1. Accordingly neither discloses or suggests the recited energy dissipation module distinct from a seat belt retractor and disposed between the retractor and pretensioner portion of the testing apparatus, as called for in amended claim 1. Happ et al. generally disclose a recyclable pretensioner but do not disclose any details with respect to its implementation, and further do not disclose or suggest its use as a testing apparatus for simulating forces generated by different pyrotechnic devices. Chamings discloses a seat belt retractor 20 and pretensioner 400 combination. Chamings is clearly not directed to a reusable pretensioner, and does not disclose or suggest use of the pretensioner as a testing apparatus. Further, while Chamings discloses a torsion bar 100, it is incorporated into the retractor extending in the bore of the retractor spool 24. Thus, Chamings does not disclose a energy dissipation module that is distinct from a retractor. In addition, Chamings fails to disclose or suggest an energy dissipation module that is disposed between the retractor and the pretensioner portion to avoid impacts with the pretensioner portion during testing operations to allow for repeated use, as called for in amended claim 1. Moreover, as neither reference suggests the use of the disclosed pretensioners as a testing apparatus, there is no suggestion in either reference for the structure, positioning and function of the recited energy dissipation module called for in amended claim 1. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 1, and claims 2-7 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over the relied upon art.

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Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-7 and 9 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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